



## Klamath Network Featured Creature

### November 2009

#### Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

##### FIELD NOTES:

##### General Description:

Red foxes are the largest members of the *Vulpes* genus. Their fur ranges from hues of pale yellowish red to deep reddish brown. They have ashy white bellies and black stocking legs. Color and seasonal variants occur; some individuals have red brown fur and a black stripe across the shoulders and down the back and others are actually silvery gray or black. No matter the variation, the red fox always has a distinctive, white-tipped tail. Red foxes measure 18-36 inches long (plus a 12-18 inch tail) and generally weigh 6-16 lbs, with the larger and heavier individuals usually found in higher latitudes. Males are slightly larger than females.

##### Behavior:

Red foxes are solitary creatures, with defended ranges inhabited year-round and consisting of an adult mating pair and their young. Within their territory are many dens and burrows, which they've either dug out or commandeered from other animals. The main den is deepest, accessible through many entrances, and used over winter and during birth. Pathways connect the main den with other burrows, favorite hunting sites, and food caches. Vocalizations are high-pitched barks, whines, and yaps; individuals have distinctive calls. They are mainly nocturnal or crepuscular, although daytime hunting activity is not uncommon, especially during the winter. The red fox commonly seeks out sumptuous small rodents, rabbits, birds, insects, fruit, and berries, rounded out occasionally with carrion and dumpster meals. Their hearing, well tuned to the low-frequency gnawing and rustling sounds of their prey, helps them stalk close, then lunge high in the air, coming down forcefully and pinning the prey with their forefeet. Leftovers are stored in caches for later snacking.

##### Where to see it in the Klamath Parks:

The red fox is a shy and stealthy resident of all six Klamath Network parks and is found throughout the region.



[http://www.biokids.umich.edu/files/6272/fox4small\\_large.jpg](http://www.biokids.umich.edu/files/6272/fox4small_large.jpg)



<http://www.clayhillforest.org/biota/mammals/images/rfox2.gif>

##### More Information:

Fox, D. 2007. "*Vulpes vulpes*" Animal Diversity Web. Online.  
([http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Vulpes\\_vulpes.html](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Vulpes_vulpes.html)).  
Accessed 13 November 2009.

Reid, F. A. 2006. A field guide to mammals of North America. Houghton Mifflin Company. Boston.  
(Distribution map graphic is from this publication.)

Whitaker, J. O. 1993. The Audubon Society field guide to North American mammals. Alfred A. Knopf. New York.

##### Reproduction and Development:

Red foxes form long-term bonds with their mates but males with multiple female mates are not uncommon. Breeding occurs January-March, producing litters of 4-10 kits in an underground den. Both parents provide parental care and in some cases non-breeding females help raise the young. The kits are weaned at 2 months. In the autumn after birth, male pups will disperse to their own territories, where they will remain for life. Females stay on with their parents a bit longer, helping to raise the next litter. Red foxes generally live 3-7 years.

##### Habitat:

Red foxes are highly adaptable and enjoy life along forest and farmland edges, in the mixed habitats of fields and brushlands, in marshy areas and wooded ravines, and scattered through suburban and urban areas. In good habitats, home ranges can be as small as 5-12 square miles.

##### Distribution:

The red fox's range extends throughout mainland Canada, Alaska, and the U.S. except for the southwestern deserts. Its historical range was once much smaller; theories on its expansion include the extirpation of the Gray and Red Wolves and forest fragmentation for agricultural use. Beyond North America, *Vulpes vulpes* is found in Europe, continental Asia, northern India, China, Japan, and northern Africa, and has been introduced to Australia.

